

# Police a visible part of judicial system

*It's a special person who takes on the added responsibility*

By ANI PEDERIAN  
Herald Staff Writer

It's seldom that a police officer gets a friendly pat on the back and a "Have a nice day," according to one Halton regional constable.

"Everybody has problems. It's part of the job and you have to accept

those problems," Const. Scott Pringle, 39, said.

"A police officer has to make important decisions involving life or death and often he's asked to make them on the spur of the moment, whereas other people can second-guess him and prove him wrong if he makes the wrong

decision."

"There's more stress than the average job, but not as much as some," he said. "There are more stressful jobs like those of airline pilots, and brain surgeons for example," he said.

Officers are expected to be above average charac-

ter, and visibly so, Const. Pringle said.

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CONST. SCOTT PRINGLE gets to them."

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Although he's been married for 12 years and has a three year old son, he said many of the other officers have marital problems.

"Most of the guys are separated, divorced or remarried," Const. Pringle said. "For starters, I think a lot of cops get married too young. This is the kind of job where you can make a decent salary at 21 and can afford to get married."

**BEST FRIENDS**

Although his best friends are policemen, he said he doesn't often attend police functions.

"I think I should be looking outside. It's fine to get together with the guys, but I like to keep my job separate from my family," Const. Pringle said.

"Some officers, especially the younger ones, live, breathe and eat police work 24 hours a



The 1982 silver Chevrolet was totalled and a 31-year old Toronto woman taken to Milton Hospital Saturday afternoon around 1 p.m. Teresa Petrillo was treated and released from hospital and her four-year old son Justice was unharmed in the one-car accident. Ontario Provincial Police said the woman was driving northbound on Highway 25, just south of Halton Road 43, when the car struck the east shoulder, and rolled over into the east ditch. There was an estimated \$7,000 damage to the vehicle. Strapped in a child seat in the back, Justice sustained no injuries in the accident.

## Police stress isn't necessarily greater says Ric Morrow

Is the stress policemen face daily on the job any greater than that of other workers? A member of the Halton regional police commission doesn't think so.

"Every job has stress and I'm not entirely sure the total stress of a police officer is greater than that of other occupations," Georgetown's Ric Morrow said.

He said between five and ten per cent of the force suffer from stress-related problems.

"Stress is common to all occupations. We're not saying we're totally unique, although in policing there are some special sources of stress," Deputy chief Bob Middaugh said.

Staff Sergeant Les Graham disagreed.

"Policework has more stress than other jobs," he said. "Just the fact people expect so much from us, and the decisions we have to make every day."

Sgt. Graham said stress doesn't cause problems if the officers can forget about their jobs when they leave for the day. It's only when they take their work home with them that the problems begin.

**CONSTRUCTIVE**

"You've got to be able to vent your frustrations and feelings in a constructive way," Deputy Chief Middaugh said. "I've always had a good relationship with my family. If I have a problem, I go home and share it with them. I don't take my job home, but I certainly do take my problems."

"It's amazing how a person like your wife, who's outside policing, can give you such a simple solution," he said.

Unfortunately, especially with young officers, the "John Wayne syndrome" develops, Deputy chief Middaugh said. Convinced they're going to save the world and catch all the "bad guys", young officers carry this attitude into their family. Instead of having a normal conversation with their wives, they have a question and answer session and become suspicious of things that don't warrant it. It's when communication stops that problems arise, he said.

Because of their special place in society, police officers tend to internal-

ize problems and blame themselves for them to the point where they either start drinking heavily or crack up, stress consultant with the force John Hasek said.

Alcoholism is a problem with police forces, he said, due to the "funny hours" policemen work, and the fact that alcohol tends to be a part of the macho image.

"We don't have statistics on alcohol-related problems with this force, but I'd certainly be naive if I didn't think that with this force of 403 people we didn't have any alcoholism," the deputy chief said. "I personally am aware of officers on this force who have had alcohol-related problems. Fortunately they've all been overcome when we looked at the problem."

Loath to seek help from social agencies others turn to when in trouble, mainly because they deal with them daily on a professional basis, police don't go for help when stress-related problems crop up in their personal lives.

What are some ways officers can cope with stress?

Sgt. Graham has a formula he calls RED - Rest, Exercise and Diet. Physical fitness programs are one of the greatest stress easers there are, deputy chief Middaugh said.

"I know in my own function here, I couldn't get along without it. Exercise is the greatest thing in the world," he said. Lunch hours find him jogging his problems into proper perspective.

As well, proper equipment and proper training can help reduce stress for police, the deputy chief said.

To tackle the effects of stress on police, the force has set aside \$15,000 to implement a counselling program led by Mr. Hasek. A retired army officer with a masters degree in psychology, Mr. Hasek studied stress among Halton officers last year and reported on the need for stress counselling.

Stress prevention programs, seminars to help supervisors recognize stress build-up and how not to cause it in their subordinates, peer counselling seminars to teach better communication and seminars for spouses are all part of the plans to be activated this June by Mr. Hasek.

### VISIBLE

Being the most visible part of the judicial system can weigh heavily on an officer's shoulders. When mistakes and errors in judgement are made by other members of the judicial system, police are the ones who get pointed out. When some guy gets a raw deal in court or a person gets away with a crime, the public looks on it as the policeman's fault, Const. Pringle said.

"Along with the glory comes the added responsibility," he said. "No more is it that the cop's word is law. You have to be accountable nowadays. It's a responsible job and it takes a special type of person to take on the responsibility. I've seen a lot of cops come and go when the stress



Notes of jazz came wafting through the doors to the John Elliott Theatre Monday night as the A.N. Myer Jazz Ensembles put on a concert for the Georgetown Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. The defending Canadian national champions, and gold award winners at the American jazz festival last month, the Kitchener-Waterloo high school students were directed by Gordon Smallwood, formerly of Georgetown. (Herald photo)

### TOE-TAPPING JAZZ

day. It's good to be zealous and keen when you're young, but you can't go through life totally committed to your job," Const. Pringle said.

Sometimes it's hard to do that, however. A lot of people can spot Const. Pringle as an officer out of uniform because of his neatly trimmed

mustache and short hair.

"When people find out you're a policeman they come up to you and tell you their problems, how they got a traffic ticket and how nasty the cop was."

It can spoil a good party, Const. Pringle said.

### Speaker is figure skater

Join Halton Hills Christian Women's Fellowship for their final meeting of the season on Tuesday, May 17 at St. George's Anglican Hall at 1:15.

Guest speaker will be June Prentice of Cambridge, a former figure skater. Tony Walraven of All's Meat Market will give us valuable tips on various cuts of meat.

Bonnie Greene of Brampton will share some songs with us. Nursery facilities are available. Reservations may be made by phoning 877-4158. Cost is \$3.25.

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**BRENDA ARCHER**

Brenda Leanne Archer has been president of the Cantante Singers since last September. Miss Archer said the group was formed in 1979 by A. Dale Wood.

Miss Archer studies at the Toronto High School for the Performing Arts. She has other interests besides singing, which include dancing, commercial work,

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